



SUFI IDEOLOGY: CONCRETE WAY OF DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The culture of valley witnessed a scenario of new ways of changes with the reformatory activities of Syed Qasim Ahmed Andrabi. He moved from place to place with his large number of followers with the concept of peace and development through Sufi ideology. His humanistic approach motivated people to adopt different technical modules. As a result he influenced the whole valley both materially and spiritually. His dynamic approach in preaching attracted people towards his Sufi message as a gateway towards the development. With the result the rural village of Puchal in district Pulwama became the center of peace and development. People used to come there from far off areas and accordingly a true and sincere concept of brotherhood got flourished.

KEY WORDS: Peace, Unity, Conversion, Morals, Skill, Economy, Puchal.

INTRODUCTION:

In the second half of sixteenth century the area of Puchal, Pulwama in the valley of Kashmir was poorly connected and backward in education and economic activities. The various social groups and classes were in regular conflict with each other. The condition of women was miserable and moral fabric of society was in tatters. The emergence and teaching of Syed Qasim Ahmed Andrabi influenced this region in an impressive way and transformed it to a healthy and peaceful society. Being spiritually efficacious, he succeeded in to edify the people and had a profound influence on the minds of people. He was born in (971.A.H./1563.A.D) at Malaratta in Srinagar in an affluent family of Andrabi Syeds. The said family migrated to valley of Kashmir after the establishment of Muslim rule.

The establishment of the rule of Muslim kings called Sultans in Kashmir neither affected its independence nor at first brought about any significant change in the political, social and cultural life of the people. Sultan Shamsu'd-din Shah Mir¹ (740-743 A.H. or 1339-42.A.D) and his immediate successors were content to carry on with the old institutions and organizations. However from the time of Sultan Qutubu'd-din² (775-791.A.H. or 1373-89.A.D) onwards when large number of Syeds and Sufis started pouring into Kashmir from different parts of Persia and Central Asia, the condition began to undergo a change under their influence. The Sufis and Syeds who migrated from Persia and Central Asia or those who were invited by the Sultan Zainul Abidin³ (823-874.A.H. or 1420-70.A.D) began to transform the life of people. As a result of their contact with the foreign Muslims⁴ the local converts began to adopt many of their manners, customs, culture etc, but at the same time they did not give up all of their old beliefs, practices and traditions. The result was the development of a unique social order in which the old ideas and institutions⁵ assimilated with the new ideas. In the process a lot of new arts and crafts of foreign origin were introduced in the valley. The immigrant Sufis⁶ contributed a lot and worked in real sense to propagate the message of peace, equality and unity. One group of immigrants consist of Andrabi Syeds⁷ from Andrabi, Afghanistan. They came here in the wake of missionary activities of Mir Syed Ali Hamdani during the rule of Sultan Qutubu'd-din.

Syed Ahmad⁸ Andrabi (d.A.H.804/A.D,1401) was the first Andrabi to enter in valley. Sultan Qutubu'd-din was impressed by his teachings and constructed a Khanqah for him at Malaratta Srinagar, known by the name of Khanqahi Andrabi⁹ and granted him the Jagir of various areas. The Khanqah became the centre of Andrabis in valley. The Andrabis upto Syed Shamsu'd-din Andrabi (d.A.H.932 /A.D.1525) were the followers of Kubravi Sufi Silsila and Mir Mirak¹⁰ Andrabi (d.A.H.990/A.D.1582) son of Syed Shamsu'd-din Andrabi was the first Andrabi in the valley of Kashmir who became the follower of Qadriya Sufi Silsila. With the passage of time descendants of Mir Mirak¹¹ Andrabi migrated to far off areas and disseminated the message of equality among the masses that too without any interest. The prime one among them was his son Syed Qasim Ahmad Andrabi.

Syed Qasim was a noted Sufi reformer of Kashmir society and acted as the true helper of people. Syed Qasim renounced worldly life and devoted himself to spread the message of peace. For many years he worked as a servant at the Khanqah of his spiritual guide Mir Mirak (father) at Malaratta Srinagar. Impressed by his piety and devotion and spiritual progress, Mir Mirak appointed him as Khalifa. On the instructions of master he migrated from Malaratta in Srinagar to Puchal¹², Pulwama in (1001.A.H./ 1593.A.D). After reaching in vil-

lage of Puchal, he went in a house in search of fire, there was only blind girl in the house. After taking little bit of fire from the house, the great Syed gifted her with the eyesight. Durga Nath Khar the father of blind was the first to accept Islam at the hands of Syed. Afterwards all the residents and dominant groups like, Khar, Dhar, Rathore, Singh, Bhat, Bohras, Kumars, Khatri, etc accepted the new faith as Islam without any fear.

After the mass conversion in a broader sense the village as society got divided into groups, peasant Andrabi Syeds (Medieval Jagirdars) identified as the literate section (first generation learner's in valley) of society and rest as zamindars comprised of, Bhat (cultivators), Sheikh (cultivators), Dar (cultivators), Lone (ferocious tribe), Wani (Shopkeeper's and Tailors), Bundh (cultivators), Rishi (land tillers), Mir (agricultural activities), Beigh (labourer), Khan (general workers), Shergujri (milk sellers), Ahangar (agricultural tools), Teli (oil pressers), Dum (modern Ganaies, people without land), Gulawans (horse keepers), Dhobi (washerman). Among the above castes, Shergogri, Teli, Ahangar, Dum, Gulawans etc, have no hereditary land of their own and belong to Scheduled caste section of society. As compared to earlier faith they were provided better status in new religious sect. Besides the above groups there is also presence of another Scheduled caste group of Muslim Watal¹³ Sheikh's (dealing with skin of animals). They too were not agriculturists and having no hereditary land. Economically their condition was very miserable and considered as deprived. However the economic disparity was there with them before the conversion and it's level to a greater extent got minimised in the Muslim community towards new positive directions.

As Syed was communicative and well versed to others like the ruling section. So he also acted as the medium of communication between the people and administrators. Because of soft and compassionate attitude he became very much popular among the people. Thus his magnetic personality, learning and piety was instrumental in influencing the people of area. His life was a model for people and influenced them greatly. Under his proper care people from far and wide got influenced and motivated towards the developmental activities. He propagated the concept of oneness, and consequently a new culture emerged in the area. His preaching became a turning point in the socio-religious and cultural activities of the locality and a new social order got cropped up. Such a social stratification had it's impact on the surroundings also. He not only boosted the literary taste among the people, but equally worked for the economic change. People were insisted to boost the humanistic approach. That approach is possible only through the Sufi teachings. Because all the essential elements of all-round change are present in the Sufi ideology. Purification of thought and soul is very important to change the mind set of people and that can be achieved through different Sufi teachings like, teacher, devotion, zikr, chillah etc.

Syed Qasim Ahmad¹⁴ felt that for the acquisition of different types of religious knowledge the teacher should be selected with care. As a good teacher Syed continued to teach the disciples according to their capacity and prescribed the right path for the spiritual attainments. He compared his task with worldly physicians and said that the medicines might be innumerable, but only a particular medicine is prescribed for a particular disease in accordance with the nature of disease, which is known only to the physicians. The same is the case with the Sufi path, although the forms of devotion are innumerable and all of them are true, the particular disease of the heart of a devotee can be cured only through a particular devotion. Like all spiritual teachers Syed laid great stress on (Salat) Namaz. He pleads that it should precede all other acts of devotion. But the key to prayer is

purification, which is of three kinds, firstly the clothes and body, secondly of the nafs (lower soul), and thirdly of the heart. He who does not purify his body and clothes is najis (unclean) according to the ahli-sharia. The other two kinds of purification can be achieved only by the followers on the spiritual path. He held purification as a pre-requisite to prayer, and guided the people and taught them the principles to be followed while praying. The real meaning of prayer, he said can be understood only by arbab-i-qulub, while going to pray one should banish all desires from their minds and purify their hearts with thoughts of God. If they do it then they face the real Qibla (Mecca) that is God. Syed Qasim has said that prayer connects the creature with the creator, and it is a medium through which man can approach God. The real meaning of prayer he says is munajat, invocation, contemplation which is impossible without concentration. He also asserts that fasting is compulsory for every Muslim, whether rich or poor, however the poor are relieved from the obligation of Zakat¹⁵ and Hajj two of the five principles of Islam. For purification of inner, their is need of complete devotion towards God.

First and foremost thing is the highest respect rather reverences to be maintained for the wise and sagacious men. Showing reverence willfully and will be strictly observing and safeguarding the norms thereof. The Salik¹⁶ should bear all hardships and rigours with patience and constancy and have no grudge against the prosecutors. He should try to alleviate others sufferings on the other hand he should forget and forgive the wrongs done to him by them, and be not revengeful in the least. He should always try to extinguish the flames of iniquities and injustice, keeping distance from friends and riots. He should be happy adopting the company of virtuous. He should always render service to the Murshid (guide) sincerely and selflessly. He should befriend those who are at his back and call, always giving them food, place, piece of advice and develop true friendship with them. A Salik should never waste even a single moment in the negligence but remain engaged in worship and remembrance of Allah. He should be on the look out for his effulgence and splendour in everything of the universe. It behooves the worshipper to realize that he is seeing his lord Allah, and if he is not capable that Allah is seeing him definitely. Salik should be generous and liberal according to his means and without giving himself preference over others. He should be full of qualities of fortitude and forbearance, firm and steadfast, not be impatient when confronted with coercive and oppressive people. The black spots and rust that collect in heart should be wiped out through the remembrance of Allah. To this effect the Holy Prophet Mohammad has stated, the peoples heart get rusty and blackened like the iron, so they should remove this rust through repeated divine remembrance. Salik should be constantly strived to get nearer and closer to Allah, by all kinds and modes of worship and meditation. One should always consider oneself as the worst and meanest of the creatures and think others to be your superiors. One has always to remain conscious of what Allah has stated. That is the grace of Allah which he bestows upon the seekers of true path.

He also performed the Zikr¹⁷, the literal meaning is 'recollection' or "remembrance". Zikr is the conscious recollection of Allah, to the exclusion of all that is other than Allah. Syed Qasim¹⁸ performed the Zikri Jahr¹⁹ (loud Zikr). This form of Zikr is performed loudly either by a lone Sufi or in company with others. It is opposed to Zikri khafia, which is performed mentally only. When the Zikr obtains complete command over the heart of the Zakir (one who recites the Zikr), the vestiges of the imaginary existence of the Zakir, begin to search through the rays of the sun of wajud (being). The dust of the adversity of existence (of the Zakir) and Zikri are destroyed. The beauty of the mazkur (object of meditation, Allah) manifest itself in the person of Zakir and confirms the divine promise. The assemblers of Zikr are the assemblies of angels. This has been narrated in various Hadiths, what would be more virtuous than this that on becomes the intimate to the lord of the dominion due to it. Besides the Zikr enlightens the heart²⁰, purifies it and removes its toughness. There are a number of virtues including internal and external benefit of the Zikr, even some have counted as many as hundreds of benefits of Zikr. Even for purification purposes he used to meditate through the observance of Chillah.

The fresh entrant into Chillah²¹ is to observe fast in day time, as fasting is immensely beneficial and efficacious to control unruly temptations and desires on nafs. It is of paramount importance to control and satisfy the inner soul so as to subdue his nafs. For this purpose incessant fasting without break is the most effective remedy, coupled with this keeping night vigil should be the regular practice without failure. He should avoid oversleeping and try to pass wakeful nights as a matter of routine, because without night vigil no Salik, (traveler) can attain his goal. The key to his blessings lies in perfect obedience and submission to him. Also guaranteed by the Allah Almighty. "Obey Allah and obey the apostle and those charged with authority among you." Here it seems to noteworthy that Chillah was first used by the holy Prophet Mohammad²². He used to retire to the Hira cave, occasionally overwhelmed by the intense ecstasy of divine love. He would spend many days and nights there deeply absorbed in devotion and worship. The underlying objective behind Chillah²³ is to cleanse heart and of the internal impurities and pollutions. It is a very established fact that without taking recourse to Chillah, overcoming sensual desire is a sheer responsibility. As such control should be exercised over the senses. It is so because when the eye sees something or the ear hears any sound, the heart comes out of its place and has imprint of seeing, hearing and feeling imprinted on it. The recurrence of what one sees and hears causes the anguish of the heart and as a consequence of the anguish, the heart loses contentment and solitude. So one should banish all evil thoughts as Syed Qasim²⁴ has said one should enter into Khalwat leaving

aside all worldly thoughts and desires so that he may see with his inward eye the hidden things and observe the phenomena beyond the domain of imagination than the external eye is not able to perceive. As an essential prerequisite scrupulously avoiding mundane discussions, he should be always in state of ablution preparatory to prayers. The first step in the direction of Haqeeqat is to get engaged in Khalwat. So the basic condition of the observance of Chillah for the attainment of Khalwat is to banish the remembrance of everything except Allah from the inner recesses of heart and in it retain only the divine thoughts. There shall remain no desires save the exclusive desire of Allah and the desire for the pursuit of righteousness.

Due to his extraordinary spiritual attainments several Karamats are associated with him. He not only influenced²⁵ the people who approached him but also removed several social evils from the society especially the habit of drinking which was completely eradicated from the area. He opposed all sorts of oppression and injustice and propagated the felling of equality among the common masses and consequently a new culture²⁶ emerged there. He influenced the culture of area both materially and spiritually. In material side he encouraged the people to adopt new arts and crafts to boost their economic set up. He introduced the art of embroidery work with the golden thread (Zardoozi), needle work on the shawls. Still one can bear the imprints of skill in the area. Even that is also a source of earning for them. Not only fine art progressed too much but also the modern dry cleaning system got introduced in the area and number of people were inclined towards the new opportunities. Dress of people that too changed because turban (male head pagri) and round head burqa for females was made familiar by him. People were mostly engaged with the profession of agriculture and the main source of subsistence.

According to a noted historian Mohammed-din Foaq²⁷ the whole area of village was the jagir of Syed. Having the mission of welfare, the land was distributed among the people. With the result the economy of people got changed to a greater extent. Due to which both agricultural and horticultural sectors progressed too much and number of new distinctive skills were opted by the peasants, especially the plantation of almond trees and cultivation of saffron for the first time started in the area under his distinctive approach. In horticulture sector production of almond and saffron was very high. Rather people were in a position to develop the links with other areas because of surplus produce in both the sectors. People from other neighbouring areas migrated their. Love prosperity and spirit of companionship engulfed the peripheral areas also. People were insisted to acquire the knowledge of different skills in order to boost the humanistic approach. Some of the scholars have noticed the resemblance between the wooden²⁸ architecture of area and some other countries of Central Asia viz. Afghanistan and Iran.

He can be also called as environmentalist because people were guided to save the environment from pollution. People were always insisted by him that it is everyone's responsibility to keep their surroundings neat and clean. With the result said area became a model for the people. By virtue of his guideline at present the area has become too much conscious and having the hundred percent sanitation facility. Not only cleanliness is maintained in the whole area but also has progressed too much as compared to other areas of the district. Because clean environment is an indication of change, like education, road and connectivity.

In the area there was evolution, revolution and development. The society got turned into progressive one in various fields like, trade, agriculture, industry, education, health etc. Besides these measures the concept of superiority and inferiority was removed from the area in terms of religion. All cultural aspects which include knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, customs and habits acquired a new shape. The people received new traits of culture as a part of social heritage, which in turn reshaped the culture and newer elements of change got introduced which later on became part of the heritage for succeeding generations.

After getting deeply involved in the progressive activities, he ultimately departed in (1040.A.H./1631.A.D) and is laid to rest at Mohallah Mohirad Uterpora (Puchal) Pulwama. His Urs at present is annually celebrated by the people on 17th of Zaeth (Kashmiri name of month). Large number of people those belonging to different religious sects visit the Shrine and seek the blessings of Syed. The devotees used to distribute rice and meat among the people especially on every Thursday.

CONCLUSION:

The present population of village has paid glowing tributes to the Syed for the services rendered to society as a great reformer. His contribution for the revival of Islam (as peace) and its faith proved very fruitful throughout the valley in general and particularly in the area. There was visible change in the morals of people, with the result the progressive activities like peace and concept got revived properly. He dedicated his whole life for the welfare of people irrespective of faith. As in other fields, so were the changes in the socio-economic field. The history of area entered a new phase with the philanthropic efforts and profoundly affected the existing pattern of area.

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12. Village of Puchal is situated towards east of district Pulwama and is almost 9 Kms away from Pulwama town. The village is comprised of three broad units,Mohirad utterpora,Kulul and Bun-Puchal. The collective name of all these is Puchal.
13. Their main occupation was leather work.The Watalas of first category make boots and sandals,while the Watalas of second class have busied themselves with the winnowing trays of leather,straw and perform mainly the duties of scavenger.Both of them at present are found in village.Their settlements are very close to the Shrine of Syed.
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